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SUBJECT: ULFA AGAIN TARGETS HINDI SPEAKING MIGRANTS WHILE RESENTMENT AGAINST BANGLADESHIS GROWS

REF: CALCUTTA 00010

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: In the run-up to India's Independence Day on August 15, insurgents from the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Karbi Longri National Liberation Front (KLNLF) have killed at least 27 Hindi-speaking migrants in the Northeast Indian state of Assam. Simultaneously with this violence against "mainland" Indians, Northeast Indian youth organizations from states sharing borders with Assam have been evicting Bengali speaking settlers - allegedly Bangladeshis. While ULFA tries to pretend that they are protecting Assamese sovereignty, there is a real concern among some ethnic groups in the Northeast that Bangladeshis are encroaching into their states. End summary.

**¶2.** (SBU) Since August 4, attacks in Assam on Hindi-speaking people who are mostly from Bihar have left at least 27 dead in the tribal Karbi Anglong district. ULFA and the KLNLF are reportedly behind the attacks. Over 30,000 Hindi-speaking migrants live in the Karbi Anglong area. On August 8, a group of about 20 KLNLF and ULFA raided the Ampathar village (inhabited by Bihari farmers) and opened fire, killing 8 people including 3 women and 2 children. On August 11, a group of about 15 KLNLF attacked four Hindi-speaking families of Rang Teron village, killing 14 and injuring three others. On August 12, KLNLF militants shot four more Hindi-speaking persons from two families in the Bokajan area. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has asked the GOI to intervene and ensure the safety of Biharis in Assam.

**¶3.** (SBU) A senior police official from Assam told Post that with security forces stepping up security in ULFA's routine areas of operation prior to Independence Day, ULFA's 27th and 28th battalions selected the "soft target" of Karbi Anglong's remote areas to conduct their attacks on the Biharis. ULFA has long demanded a "sovereign Assam," and conducted violent campaigns against Hindi-speakers from mainland India in the past. In early 2007, ULFA killed more than 60 migrants in separate attacks in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Sivasagar districts of Assam (reftel). Now, during the run-up to India's Independence Day celebrations on August 15, ULFA is repeating its campaign of ethnic violence. The GOI generally has encouraged ULFA to come forward for peace talks over the years, but ULFA has remained adamant in its demand for negotiations on the sovereignty issue, which has effectively stymied the peace process.

**¶4.** (SBU) Simultaneously, since July 10, Assam has witnessed an influx of 4,000-5,000 Bengali speaking people from the

neighboring states of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. These migrants were driven out by aggressive youth organizations who branded them as "foreigners" from Bangladesh. The Northeast Students Organization, the All Assam Students' Union, and other youth groups also accused the Congress-led Assam government of bowing to the "Bangladeshi lobby" by allowing illegal migrants to settle in Assam and in the border areas of neighboring states. Assam officials, however, told Post that those pushed back into Assam recently are actually Indian citizens who have been erroneously branded foreigners.

**¶5. (SBU) Comment:** Many officials in Assam feel that the violence against Hindi-speaking Indian migrants in Assam is simply typical ULFA violence that occurs around symbolic Indian holidays. Tellingly, ULFA does not target other "foreigners" such as the Bangladeshis who live in Assam and the Northeast, giving credence to the oft-repeated GOI suspicion that ULFA leadership resides in Bangladesh at the pleasure of the Bangladeshi government. The pushback against Bangladeshi migrants in other parts of the Northeast, however, demonstrates the continuing resentment toward Bangladeshis, who are perceived to be encroaching on land and jobs in the Northeast.

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